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THE RHINEGOLD

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R. WAGNER

THE RHINEGOLD

(F. Jameson)

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— o —
PRELUDE TO THE TRILOGY:

THE RING OF THE NIBLUNG

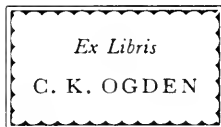
BY

RICHARD WAGNER.

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

BY

FREDERICK JAMESON.



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Scene I. The depths of the Rhine. Three Rhine-maidens guard the magical Rhine-gold which lies on the top of a rock. Alberich, a Niblung, approaches and, fascinated by their beauty, clumsily and unsuccessfully makes love to each in turn. The sun rises and the Rhine-gold, touched by its rays, floods the waters with golden light. Alberich, astonished, is told by the maidens of the magic power of the gold and how a ring made of it confers unmeasured power on its possessor, if he forswears love. Alberich, enraged and disappointed in his wooing curses love and steals the gold. The scene changes to

Scene II. An open place from which across the Rhine the newly built castle, Walhall, is visible. Wotan and Fricka lie asleep. On waking, Wotan greets the castle, but Fricka reproachfully reminds him of the price to be paid to the Giants for building it, viz: the goddess Freia, the apples from whose garden confer eternal youth on the gods, if eaten daily.

Freia enters, pursued by Fasolt and Fafner; the giants, who demand her as the promised reward of their work. Wotan temporizes with them until the entrance of Loge, the fire god, who has engaged to save the goddess. Tempted by Loge's account of the marvels of the Rhine-gold, the giants offer to take it in lieu of Freia, whom, however, they take away with them as a hostage until Wotan pays the gold. Wotan and Loge depart for Nibelheim. The scene changes to

Scene III. Nibelheim, the subterranean home of the Niblungs. Wotan and Loge find Mime, Alberich's brother, bewailing the fate of the Niblungs, groaning under the tyranny Alberich exercises through the power of the Ring. Alberich enters presently and is induced by Loge to exhibit the virtues of the "Tarnhelm", a wishing cap, just made by Mime. He first transforms himself into a serpent, and then into a toad in which form he is seized by Wotan and, on returning to his own shape, bound and carried off. The scene changes to

Scene IV. an open place, as in Scene II. Alberich dragged in by Loge, is forced to deliver up the hoard of gold he has amassed, together with the Tarnhelm and the Ring. When then released from his bonds, he solemnly curses the Ring and all future possessors of it and departs. Fricka, Donner and Froh enter, followed soon by the Giants who bring Freia back. They refuse to release her until fully paid and claim the Ring as well as the hoard and the Tarnhelm. This Wotan refuses, but warned by Erda, the all-wise one, who rises from the earth, he at length gives it up. The giants quarrel over the possession of the Ring and Fasner kills his brother Fasolt with a stroke of his club and carries off the gold. Donner then calls the clouds together and, on the clearing away of the storm, a rainbow bridge is seen across the Rhine over which the gods pass to Walhall, as the plaints of the Rhine-maidens for the loss of the gold arise from the river far below.

P E R S O N S.

—o—

| | | |
|-------------|---|------------------|
| WOTAN, | } | Gods. |
| DONNER, | | |
| FROH, | | |
| LOGE, | | |
| FASOLT, | } | Giants. |
| FAFNER, | | |
| ALBERICH, | } | Niblungs. |
| MIME, | | |
| FRICKA, | } | Goddesses. |
| FREIA, | | |
| ERDA, | | |
| WOGLINDE, | } | Rhine-daughters. |
| FLOSSHILDE, | | |
| WELLGUNDE, | | |

Niblungs.



NOTE:

Where the stage directions in the German and English versions differ, the latter appear as written by Wagner in the score.

FIRST SCENE.

—o—

At the Bottom of the Rhine.

Greenish twilight, lighter above, darker below. The upper part of the scene is filled with moving water, which restlessly streams from right to left. Towards the bottom the waters resolve themselves into a fine mist, so that the space, to a man's height from the stage, seems free from the water which floats like a train of clouds over gloomy depths. Every-where are steep points of rock jutting up from the depths and enclosing the whole stage; all the ground is broken up into a wild confusion of jagged pieces, so that there is no level place, while on all sides darkness indicates other deeper fissures.

One of the RHINE-DAUGHTERS circles with graceful swimming motions round the central rock.

Woglinde.

Weia! Waga!
Wandering waters,
swing ye our cradle!
wagala weia!
walala, weiala weia!

Wellgunde's

(voice from above).

Woglinde, watchest alone?

Woglinde.

If Wellgunde came we were two

Wellgunde

(dives down to the rock).

How safe is thy watch?

Woglinde

(eludes her by swimming).

Safe from thy wiles!

(They playfully chase one another.)

Flosshilde's

(voice from above).

Heiaha weia!

Heedless, wild watchers!

Wellgunde.

Flosshilde, swim!

Woglinde flies:

help me to hinder her flying!

Flosshilde

(dives down between them).

The sleeping gold

badly ye guard!

Better beset

the slumberer's bed,

or both will pay for your sport!

With merry cries they swim apart. FLOSSHILDE tries to catch first one and then the other; they elude her and then together chase her and dart laughing and playing like fish between the rocks.

From a dark chasm ALBERICH climbs up one of the rocks. He remains watching the watermaidens with increasing pleasure.

Alberich.

He he! ye nixies!

how ye delight me,

daintiest folk!

from Niebelheim's night

fain would I come,

would ye turn but to me!

(The maidens stop playing on hearing ALBERICH's voice.)

Woglinde.

Hei! who is there?

Wellgunde.

A voice in the dark.

Flosshilde.

Look who is below!

(They dive deeper down and see the Niblung.)

Woglinde and Wellgunde.

Fie! thou grisly one!

Flosshilde

(swimming quickly up).

Look to the gold!

Father warned us

such foe to fear.

(The two others follow her, and all three gather quickly round the middle rock.)

Alberich.

You, above there!

The Three.

What wouldst thou, below there?

Alberich.

Spoil I your sport,
if still I stand here and gaze?
dive ye but deeper,
with you fain
would a Nibelung dally and play.

Wellgunde.

Would he be our playmate?

Woglinde.

Doth he but mock?

Alberich.

How bright and fair
in the light ye shine!
Fain are my arms
to enfold a maiden so fair,
would she come to me here!

Flosshilde.

I laugh at my fear:
the foe is in love!

(They laugh.)

Wellgunde.

The languishing imp!

Woglinde.

Let us go near him!

(She lets herself sink to the top of the rock, the foot of which
ALBERICH has reached.)

Alberich.

One sinks down to me.

Woglinde.

Come close to me here!

Alberich

(climbs with imp-like agility, but with frequent checks, to the top
of the rock).

Loathsome, slimy,
slippery pebbles!

I cannot stand!

My hands and my feet
cannot fasten or hold
on the treacherous smoothness!

(He sneezes.)

Water drops
fill up my nostrils:
accursed sneezing!

(He has come near WOGLINDE.)

Woglinde

(laughing).

Sneezing tells
of my love's approach!

Alberich.

My sweetheart be,
thou loveliest child!

(He tries to embrace her.)

Woglinde

(avoiding him).

Me wouldst thou woo?
then woo me up here!

(She has reached another rock. The sisters laugh.)

Alberich

(scratches his head).

Alas! thou escap'st?

Come but nearer!
Thou canst fly
where I scarcely can creep.

Woglinde

(swims to a third rock, deeper down).

Climb to the ground,
then safe wouldst thou clasp me.

Alberich

(clambers hastily down).

'Tis better down lower!

Woglinde

(darts quickly to a high rock at the side).

Now let us go higher!

(All the maidens laugh.)

Alberich.

How catch in her flight
the timid fish?

Wait awhile, false one!

(He tries to climb hastily after her.)

Wellgunde

(has sunk down to a lower rock on the other side).

Heia, thou fair one!
hear'st thou me not?

Alberich

(turning round).

Call'st thou to me?

Wellgunde.

I counsel thee well:
to me turn thee
and Woglinde heed not!

Alberich

(clambers hastily over the ground to WELLGUNDE).

Far fairer seemest
thou than that shy one,
who gleams less brightly,
and looks too sleek.
Yet deeper dive,
if thou wouldst delight me.

Wellgunde

(letting herself sink down a little nearer to him).

Now, am I not near?

Alberich.

Not near enough!
Thy slender arms
come fling around me;
that I may touch thee
and toy with thy tresses,
with passionate heat
on thy bossom so soft let me press me!

Wellgunde.

Art thou bewitched
and longing for love joys?
then shew, thou fair one,
what favour is thine!
Fie! thou hairy
and hideous imp!
Swarthy, spotted
and sulphury dwarf!
Seek thee a sweet-heart
whom thou dost please!

Alberich

(tries to hold her by force).

Though foul be my face,
my hands hold thee fast!

Wellgunde

(quickly swimming up to the middle rock).

Hold fast, I flow from thy hands!

(All three laugh.)

Alberich

(calling angrily after her).

Faithless thing!
Bony, chilyskinned fish!
Seem I not comely,
pretty and playful,
brisk and bright?

heil go wanton with eels, then,
if so loathsome am I!

Flosshilde.

Why chid'st thou, elf?
So soon cast down?
But twain hast thou wooed:
try but the third one;
sweetest balm
surely her love would bring!

Alberich.

Soothing song
comes to my ears!
How good that ye
are not but one!
of many some one I may win me,
alone no maiden would choose me! —
If I may trust thee,
then glide down to me!

Flosshilde

(dives down to ALBERICH).

How foolish are ye,
senseless sisters,
if ye find him not fair!

Alberich

(quickly approaching her).

Both dull and hideous
well may I deem them,
now that the fairest I see!

Flosshilde

(flattering).

O sing still on
thy soft sweet song,
its charm enraptures mine ear!

Alberich

(confidently caressing her).

My heart bounds
and flutters and burns
when such sweet praise laughs to me.

Flosshilde

(with gentle resistance).

Thy winsome sweetness
makes glad mine eyes
and thy tender smile
all my spirit cheers!

(She draws him tenderly to her.)

Dearest of men!

Alberich.

Sweetest of maids!

Flosshilde.

Wert thou but mine!

Alberich.

Might I e'er hold thee!

Flosshilde

(ardently).

O, the sting of thy glance
and the prick of thy beard
for ever to see and to feel!
Might the locks of thy hair,
so shaggy and sharp,
but float round Flosshilde ever!
and thy shape like a toad
and the croak of thy voice,
o might I, dazzled and dumb,
see and hear nothing but these!

(WOGLINDE and WELLGUNDE have dived down close to them
and now break out into ringing laughter.)

Alberich

(starting up, alarmed).

Wretches, laugh ye at me?

Flosshilde

(suddenly darting from him).

As fits at the end of the song!

(She swims quickly up with her sisters and joins in their
laughter.)

Alberich

(in a wailing voice).

Woe's me! ah woe's me!

alas! alas!

The third one, so dear,
doth she too betray?

Ye shameless, shifting,
worthless and infamous wantons!

Feed ye on falsehood,
treacherous watery brood?

The three Rhine-maidens.

Wallala! Lalaleia! Lalei!

Heia! Heia! Haha!

Shame on thee, imp!

why chid'st thou down yonder!
hear the words that we sing thee!

Say wherefore, faintheart,
didst thou not hold

the maiden thou dost love?

True are we,

free from all guile,

to him who holds us fast.

Gaily to work,

and grasp without fear;

in the floods not fleet is our flight.

(They swim apart hither and thither, now deeper now higher, to
incite ALBERICH to chase them.)

Alberich.

Through all my frame

what passionate fire

now burns and glows.

Rage and longing,

fierce and mighty,

lash me to madness!

Though ye may laugh and lie,

yearning masters my heart,

and one to me now shall yield her!

He begins the chase with desperate exertions. With terrible agility he climbs the rocks, springs from one to the other and tries to catch first one then another of the maidens who always elude him with mocking laughter. He staggers and falls into the abyss, then clammers hastily aloft again to renew the chase. They let themselves sink a little. He almost reaches them, falls back again, and again tries to catch them. Foaming with rage, he pauses breathless and stretches his clenched fist up towards the maidens.

Alberich.

Could I but capture one!

He remains in speechless rage gazing upwards, when suddenly he is attracted and chained by the following spectacle.

Through the water from above breaks a continuously brightening glow which on a high point of the middle rock kindles to a blinding, brightly-shining gleam. A magical light streams from this through the water.

Woglinde.

Look, sisters!

The waker laughs to the deep.

Wellgunde.

Through the waters green
the radiant sleeper he greets.

Flosshilde.

He kisses her eyelids,
so to unclothe them.
Look, she smiles
in the shining light.
Through the floods afar
flows her glittering ray!

The Three

(together swimming round the rock).

Heiajaheia!

Heiajaheia!

Wallalallalala leiajahei!

Rhinegold!

Rhinegold!

Radiant joy,

thou laughest in glorious light!

Glistening beams

thy splendour shoots forth o'er the waves!
Heiajahei!
Heiajaheia!
Waken, friend!
wake in joy!
games will we play
so gladly with thee:
flasheth the foam,
flameth the flood,
as, floating around,
with dancing and singing,
we joyously dive to thy bed!
Rhinegold!
Rhinegold!
Heiajaheia!
Wallalaleia jahei!

Alberich

(whose eyes, strongly attracted by the gleam, are fixed on the gold).

What is't, ye sleek ones,
that there doth gleam and glow?

The three maidens

(alternately).

Where hast thou, churl, ever dwelt,
of the Rhinegold ne'er to have heard?

Knows not the elf
of the gold's bright eye, then,
that wakes and sleeps in turn?
of the wondrous star
in watery deeps,
whose glory lightens the waves? —
See how blithely
we glide in its radiance!
wouldst thou, faintheart,
then, bathe in brightness?
Come float and frolic with us!

(They laugh.)

Alberich.

For your water games
is the gold alone good?
Then nought would it boot me!

Woglinde.

The golden charm
wouldst thou not flout,
knewest thou all of its wonders.

Wellgunde.

The world's wealth
would be won by the man
who out of the Rhinegold
fashioned the ring
which measureless might would bestow.

Flosshilde.

Our father said it,
and bade us ever
guard with wisdom
the shining hoard,
that no false one should craftily steal it:
then peace, ye chattering brood!

Wellgunde.

Most prudent sister,
why chidest thou so?
Well knowest thou,
only by one
the golden charm may be wrought?

Woglinde.

He who the sway
of love forswears,
he who delight
of love forbears,
alone the magic can master
that forces the gold to a ring.

Wellgunde.

Secure then are we
and free from care:

for all that liveth loveth,
none from love's fetters would free him.

Woglinde.

And least of all he,
the languishing dwarf,
with love-desire
wasting away.

Flosshilde.

I fear him not
whom here we have found:
in his passion's blaze
nearly I burned.

Wellgunde.

A sulphur brand
in the water's surge,
in lover's frenzy
hissing loud!

The three

(together).

Wallalalleia! Lahei!
Loveliest Niblung!
laugh'st thou not too?
In the golden shimmer
how fair thou dost shine!
O come, lovely one, laugh too with us!

(They laugh.)

Alberich

(with his eyes fixed on the gold, has listened well to the sisters'
hasty chatter).

The world's wealth
by thy spell might I win for mine own?
If love be denied me,
my cunning shall win me delight!

(Terribly loud.)

Mock ye, then, on!
the Niblung neareth your toy.

Raging, he springs to the middle rock and clambers with terrible haste to its summit. The maidens separate, screaming, and swim upwards on different sides.

The three Rhine-daughters.
Heia! Heia! Heiahahei!
Save yourselves!
the elf is distraught!
how the water swirls
where'er he swims:
for love has lost him his wits!
(They laugh in unrestrained arrogance.)

Alberich
(with a last spring reaches the summit and stretches his hand out towards the gold).

Fear ye not yet?
Then wanton in darkness,
watery brood!
My hand quenches your light,
I wrest from the rock the gold,
fashion the ring of revenge;
for, hear me ye floods —
love henceforth be accursed!

He tears the gold from the rock with terrible force and plunges with it hastily into the depths where he quickly disappears. Thick darkness falls suddenly on the scene. The maidens dive down after the robber.

The Rhine-daughters
(crying out).
Seize on the spoiler!
Rescue the gold!
Help us! Help us!
Woe! Woe!

The water sinks down with them. From the lowest depth is heard Alberich's shrill mocking laughter. — The rocks disappear in thickest darkness; the whole stage is from top to bottom filled with black water waves, which for some time seem to sink downwards.

SECOND SCENE.

—o—

The waves have gradually changed into clouds which little by little become lighter, and at length disperse into a fine mist. As the mist disappears upwards in little clouds

an open space on a mountain height

becomes visible in the twilight. — The dawning day lights up with growing brightness a castle with glittering pinnacles which stands on the top of a cliff in the background. Between this cliff and the foreground a deep valley through which the Rhine flows is visible. — At one side, on a flowery bank, lies WOTAN with FRICKA near him, both asleep.

Fricka

(awakes: her gaze falls on the castle; alarmed).

Wotan, give ear! awaken!

Wotan

(dreaming).

The sacred dwelling of joy
is guarded by gate and door:
manhood's honour,
might without bound,
rise now to endless renown!

Fricka

(shakes him).

Up from thy vision's
blissful deceit!
My husband, wake and bethink thee!

Wotan

(awakes and raises himself a little. His eyes are at once fixed by the view of the castle).

Achieved the eternal work!

On mountain summit
the gods' abode!
proudly stand
the glittering walls!
As in dreams 'twas designed,
as by will 'twas decreed,
strong and fair

stands it in sight:
hallowed, glorious pile!

Fricka.

What thee delighteth
brings me but dread!
Thou hast thy joy,
my fear is for Freia!
Heedless one, dost thou remember
the truly promised reward!
The work is finished
and forfeit the pledge:
forgettest thou what thou must pay?

Wotan.

I mind me well of the bargain
they made who raised me the walls:
by a bond bound
were the rebels in thrall,
that they this hallowed
dwelling might build me;
it stands now — thank the workers: —
for the wage fret not thyself.

Fricka.

O laughing, impious lightness!
loveless, cold-hearted folly!
Had I but known of thy pact,
the trick I then had withstood;
but ever ye men
kept afar from the women,
that, deaf to us and in peace,
alone ye might deal with the giants.
So without shame
ye base ones abandoned
Freia, my loveliest sister,
pleased right well with your pact!
What to your hard hearts
is holy and good,
when ye men lust for might!

Wotan.

Was like greed
to Fricka unknown,
when she for the building did beg?

Fricka.

For my husband's truth aye in care
with sorrow must I ponder,
how to hold him beside me,
lured by his fancy afar:

halls fair and stately,
joys of the homestead,
surely should bind thee
in peaceful repose.
But thou in this work hast dreamed
of war and arms alone:
glory and might
ever to win thee,
and ne'er ending strife to enkindle,
were builded the towering walls.

Wotan

(smiling).

Wouldst thou, o wife,
in the fortress then fix me,
to me, the God, must be granted,
that, in the castle
prisoned, yet from
outside I must win me the world:
ranging and changing
love all who live;
forego that game, then, I cannot!

Fricka.

Cold, unloving,
pitiless heart!
For the vain delights
of power and sway
thou stakest in insolent scorn
love and a woman's worth?

Wotan

(gravely).

When I for wife sought to win thee,
an eye as forfeit
placed I wooing in pledge:
how vainly now dost thou chide!
Women I worship
e'en more than thou wouldst;
and Freia, the fair one,
will I not grant;
in truth, such thought ne'er was mine.

Fricka.

Then shelter her now:
defenceless, in fear,
hither she hastens for help.

Freia

(enters as if in hasty flight).

Help me, sister!
shelter me, brother!
From yonder mountain
threatened me Fasolt,
he comes now hither to take me.

Wotan.

Let him threat!
Saw'st thou not Loge?

Fricka.

That thou still on the trickster
bestowest thy trust —!
Much wrong he ever has wrought,
yet aye again he ensnares thee.

Wotan.

Where simple truth serves,
alone I seek no helper.
But, to force the spite
of foes to serve me,
guile and cunning alone,
as Loge has learned them, can teach.

He who this treaty designed
gave promise Freia to ransom:
on him I fix now my faith.

Fricka.

And he leaves thee alone! —
There stride the giants
hither in haste:
where lurks thy crafty ally?

Freia.

Where linger, then, my brothers,
when help they should bring me,
now that Wotan abandons the weak!
O help me, Donner!
Hither, hither!
Rescue Freia, my Froh!

Fricka.

The disgraceful band who betrayed thee,
have all now hidden away!

Fasolt and Fafner

(both of gigantic stature, armed with strong clubs, enter).

Fasolt.

Soft sleep
closed thine eyes;
the while we twain
unslumb'ring built the walls.
Mighty toil
tired us not,
heavy stones
we heaped on high;
lofty tower,
gate and door
guard and keep
thy castle halls secure.
There stands
what we builded,
shining bright
in day-light's beams:

wend ye in,
pay us our wage!

Wotan.

Name, workers, your wage;
what deem ye fitting guerdon?

Fasolt.

The price was fixed
as fit it was deemed;
is all so soon forgot?
Freia, the fair one,
Holda, the free one, —
the bargain holds,
we bear her with us.

Wotan.

Has, then, your bargain
blinded your wits?
Other guerdon ask:
Freia may I not grant!

Fasolt

(for a moment Fasolt stands speechless with angry astonishment).

What say'st thou? ha!
Traitor art thou?
thy treaty a trick?
What thy spear wards
serves but for sport,
all the runes of weighty bargains?

Fafner

(mockingly).

My trusty brother,
seest thou, fool, now his guile?

Fasolt.

Son of light,
light of spirit!
hear and heed thyself;
in treaties aye keep troth!
What thou art,
art thou only by treaties;

by bargains bound,
bounded too is thy might:
art wiser thou
than wary are we,
pledged are we freemen
in peace to thee:
cursed be all thy wisdom,
peace be no more between us,
if, no more open,
honest and free,
in bargains thou breakest thy faith!
A foolish giant
gives this rede:
thou, wise one, learn it from him!

Wotan.

How sly to take in earnest
what but in sport we have spoken!
The loveliest goddess,
light and bright,
what boots you dullards her grace?

Fasolt.

Mock'st thou us?
ha, how unjust!
Ye who by beauty reign,
hallowed radiant race!
how vainly strive ye
for towers of stone,
place for court and hall
woman's beauty in pledge!
We, dullards, plague ourselves,
sweating with toil-hardened hands —
to win us a woman,
who, winsome and sweet,
should dwell aye among us:
and the pact call'st thou a jest?

Fafner.

Cease thy foolish chatter;

no gain look we to win:
 Freia's charms
 help little,
 but much it boots
from 'mongst the gods now to wrest her.
 Golden apples
 ripen within her garden,
 she alone
knoweth how they are tended;
 the garden's fruit
 grants to her kindred,
 each day renewed,
 youth everlasting:
 pale and blighted
 passeth their beauty,
 old and weak
 waste they away,
if e'er Freia should fail them.
From their midst let us bear her away!

Wotan

(aside).

Loge lingers long!

Fasolt.

Straight speak now thy word!

Wotan.

Ask for other wage!

Fasolt.

No other, Freia alone!

Fafner.

Thou, there, follow us!

(Fafner and Fasolt press towards FREIA.)

Freia

(getting away).

Help! help from the hard ones!

Donner and Froh

(enter in haste).

Froh

(clasping Freia in his arms).

To me, Freia!

Back from her, miscreant!

Froh shields the fair one!

Donner

(planting himself before the two giants).

Fasolt and Fafner,

know ye the weight

of my hammer's heavy blow?

Fafner.

What means thy threat?

Fasolt.

Why com'st thou here?

Strife have we not sought,

nought ask we now but our wage.

Donner

(swings his hammer).

Full oft paid I,

giants, your wage.

In debt to thieves

I ne'er remain.

Approach and take your due

weighed with a generous hand.

Wotan

(stretching out his spear between the disputants).

Hold, thou fierce one!

Nought booteth force!

All bonds the shaft

of my spear doth shield:

spare then thy hammer's haft!

Freia.

Woe's me! Woe's me!

Wotan forsakes me!

Fricka.

Is this thy resolve,

merciless heart?

Wotan

(turns away and sees Loge coming).

There is Loge!
Such is thy haste
bargains to mend
that were struck by thy evil counsel?

Loge

(has come up out of the valley).

How? what bargain
have I then counselled?
Belike 'twas the pact
that ye with the giants did make?
To hollow and height
my whim drives me on;
house and hearth
delight me not.
Donner and Froh
are dreaming of household joys;
if they would wed,
a home e'en must they find.
A proud abode,
a castle sure,
thereto leaned Wotan's wish.
House and hall,
court and keep,
the blessed abode
now standeth firmly built.
The lordly pile
I proved myself,
if all be firm,
well have I tried:
Fasolt and Fafner
faithful I found:
no stone stirs on its bed.
Not idle was I
like many here;
who calls me laggard, he lies.

Wotan.

Craftily
wouldst thou escape?
If thou betray me,
truly I bid thee beware!
Of all the Gods,
as thy only friend,
I took thee up
mid the troop who trusted thee not.
Now speak and counsel well.
Whenas the builders did crave
from us Freia as guerdon,
thou know'st, I only
yielded my word
when, on thy faith, thou didst promise
to ransom the hallowed pledge?

Loge.

With greatest pains
thereon to ponder,
how we might free her,
that — promise I gave.
But there to prosper
where nought will fit
and nought will serve —
could e'er such promise be given?

Fricka

(to Wotan).

See what traitorous
knave thou didst trust!

Froh.

Loge art thou,
but liar I call thee!

Donner.

Accursed flame,
I will quench thy glow!

Loge.

Their disgrace to cover,
fools now revile me!

(DONNER and FROH threaten to strike LOGE.)

Wotan

(steps between them).

In quiet leave now my friend!
Ye know not Loge's craft:
richer count I
his counsel's worth,
when 'tis haltingly paid.

Fafner.

Halt no longer!
Promptly pay!

Fasolt.

Long waiteth our wage!

Wotan

(turns sharply to Loge).

Now hear, crabbed one!
keep thy word!
Say truly, where hast thou strayed?

Loge.

Thankless was ever
Loge's toil!
In care but for thee,
looked I around
and restlessly searched
to the ends of the world,
to find a ransom for Freia,
fit for the giants and fair.
In vain sought I,
and see now full well,
in the world's wide ring
nought is so rich
that a man will take it as price
for woman's worth and delight!
(All show astonishment and perplexity.)

Where life ever is moving,
in water, earth and air,
 much sought I,
 asking of all men,
 where force doth but stir
 and life hath beginning:
 what among men
 more mighty seems
than woman's worth and delight?
But where life ever is moving,
 still scorned alone
 was my questioning craft:
in water, earth and air,
 none will forego
 the joy of love.
 But one I looked on
who love's delights forswore;
 for ruddy gold
renouncing all woman's grace.
The Rhine's fair winsome children
told to me all their woe:
 the Nibelung,
 Night-Alberich,
 seeking in vain
 grace from the swimmers to win;
 the Rhinegold
the robber then stole in revenge:
 he deems it now
 the holiest good,
greater than woman's grace.
 For the glittering dross,
 so reft from the deep,
resounded the maidens' wailing:
 to thee, Wotan,
 turning their prayers
that thy vengeance fall on the Niblung,
 the gold they pray thee
 now to give them

to shine in the water for ever.

 This to tell thee

 I promised the maidens:
and now has Loge kept faith.

Wotan.

 Foolish art thou,
 if not e'en knavish!

Myself seest thou in need:
what help for others have I?

Fasolt

(who has listened attentively, to Fafner).

The gold I begrudge the Niblung;
much ill he ever has wrought us,
but slyly still the dwarf
has slipped away from our hands.

Fafner.

 Still the Niblung
 broods on new ill
if gold but grant him power. —
 Listen Loge!
 say without lie:
what glory lies in the gold
which the Niblung holds so dear?

Loge.

 A toy 'tis
 in the waters sleeping,
serving for children's delight;
 but if to a rounded
 ring it be fashioned,
measureless might it grants
and wins the world for its lord.

Wotan.

 Rumours came to me
 of the Rhinegold:
 runes of booty
hide in its ruddy glow;

might and wealth
unmeasured a ring would gain.

Fricka.

Serves as well
the golden trinket's
glittering dross
to deck forth a woman's grace?

Loge.

Her husband's faith
were fixed by the wife
who ever bore
the glist'ning charm
that busy dwarfs are forging
toiling in thrall to the ring.

Fricka.

O, might but my husband
win him the gold?

Wotan.

Methinks it were wise now
sway o'er the ring to ensure me. —
But say Loge,
what is the art
by which the trinket is shaped?

Loge.

A rune of magic
makes the gold a ring ;
no one knows it ;
but he can use the spell
who blessed love forswears.

(WOTAN turns away in ill-humour.)

That likes thee not ;
too late, too, cam'st thou :
Alberich did not delay.
Fearless the might
of the spell he won ;
and rightly wrought was the ring !

Donner.

Slaves should we be
all to the dwarf,
were not the ring from him wrested.

Wotan.

The ring I must win me!

Froh.

Lightly now
without curse of love were it won.

Loge.

Right well,
without art, as in children's play!

Wotan.

Then counsel, how?

Loge.

By theft!

What a thief stole,
steal thou from the thief:
couldst better gain aught for thine own?
But with weapons dire
fighteth Alberich;
deep and shrewd
must be thy working,
if the thief thou wouldst o'erreach,
so that thou may'st render
the ruddy dross,
the gold once more to the maidens,
for therefor pray they to thee.

Wotan.

The river maidens?
What boots me that rede?

Fricka.

Of the watery brood
let nought be spoken;
to my distress,
many a man
they lured to their watery lair.

WOTAN stands silently struggling with himself. The other gods fix their eyes on him in mute suspense. — Meanwhile FAFNER has been conferring aside with FASOLT.

Fafner.

Trust me, more than Freia
boots the glittering gold:
and endless youth would be won
if the golden charm were our own.
(FAFNER and FASOLT approach WOTAN again.)

Hear, Wotan,
our word as we wait!
Free with you leave we Freia;
guerdon less great
shall content us:
for us rude giants
enough were Nibelheims's ruddy gold.

Wotan.

Are ye distraught?
What is not mine own,
how can I, ye shameless ones, grant you?

Fafner.

Hard labour
built yonder walls:
light were't
for thy cunning and force
(what our spite e'er failed to achieve)
to fetter the Niblung fast.

Wotan.

For you shall I
deal with the Niblung?
for you fetter the foe?
Insolent
and greedy, ye dullards,
are ye made by my debt!

Fasolt

(suddenly seizes FREIA and draws her with FAFNER to the side).

To us, maid!
We claim thee now!

As pledge stay thou with us
till thy ransom be paid!

(FREIA screaming.)

Fafner.

Far from here
let her be borne!
Till evening, heed me well!
held is she as a pledge;
at night return we;
but when we come,
if at hand lie not the ransom,
the Rhinegold fair and red —

Fasolt.

At end is her shrift then,
Freia is forfeit:
for ever dwell she with us!

Freia.

Sister! Brothers!
Save me! Help!

(She is borne away by the hastily retreating giants.)

Froh.

Up, to her aid!

Donner.

Perish then, all things!

(They look at WOTAN enquiringly.)

Loge

(looking after the giants).

Over stock and stone they stride
down to the vale:
through the water heavily
wade now the giants.
Sad at heart
hangs Freia,
so roughly borne on their shoulders! —
Heia! hei!
the churls, how they lumber along!

Now they tramp up through the vale.
First at Riesenheim's bound
their rest will they take.

(He turns to the gods.)

How darkly Wotan doth brood?
Alack, what aileth the gods?

A pale mist fills the stage, gradually growing denser. In it the god's appearance becomes increasingly wan and aged. All stand in dismay and expectation looking at Wotan, who fixes his eyes on the ground in thought.

Loge.

Mists, do ye trick me?
mocks me a dream?
Dismayed and wan
ye wither so soon!
From your cheeks the bloom dies out;
and quenched is the light of your eyes! —
Courage Froh!
day is at dawn! —
From thy hand, Donner,
escapeth the hammer!
What grief hath Fricka?
is she in sorrow
for Wotan, gloomy and grey,
who seems already grown old?

Fricka.

Woe's me! Woe's me!
What has befall'n?

Donner.

My hand doth sink!

Froh.

My heart stands still!

Loge.

I see now! hear what ye lack!
Of Freia's fruit
not yet have ye eaten to-day.
The golden apples
that grow in her garden

have made you all doughty and young,
ate ye them day by day.

The garden's keeper
in pledge now is granted;
on the branches droops
and dies the fruit,
decayed soon it will fall.

It irks me little;
for meanly ever
Freia to me
stinted the sweet tasting fruit:
but half as godlike
am I, ye great ones, as you!
But ye set your fortune
on the youth-giving fruit:
that wotted the giants well;
and at your lives
this blow now is aimed:
to save them be your care!
Lacking the apples
old and grey,
worn and weary,
withered, the scoff of the world,
dies out the godly race.

Fricka.

Wotan, my lord!
unhappy man!
See how thy laughing
lightness has brought us
all disgrace and shame!

Wotan

(starting up with a sudden resolve).

Up, Loge!
descend with me!
To Nibelheim go we together:
for I will win me the gold.

Loge.

The Rhinedaughters
called upon thee:
ah, may they then hope for a hearing?

Wotan

(violently).

Peace, thou babbler,
Freia, the fair one,
Freia needs must be ransomed!

Loge.

At thy command,
swiftly we go:
down the steeps
shall we make way through the Rhine?

Wotan.

Not through the Rhine!

Loge.

Then swing we ourselves
through the sulphur-cleft:
down yonder slip in with me!

He goes first and disappears at the side in a cleft from which,
immediately afterwards, a sulphurous vapour arises.

Wotan.

Ye others wait
till evening here:
the golden ransom
to win back our youth will I gain!

He descends after Loge into the cleft. The sulphurous vapour
issuing therefrom spreads over the whole stage and quickly fills
it with thick clouds. Those remaining on it are soon hidden.

Donner.

Fare thee well, Wotan!

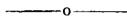
Froh.

Good luck! Good luck!

Fricka.

O soon return
to thy sorrowing wife!

The vapour thickens to a quite black cloud which rises from below upwards; this then changes to a dark rocky chasm which continues to rise so that the theatre seems to be gradually sinking into the earth.



THIRD SCENE.



A ruddy glow shines from various places in the distance, increasing clamour as from smithing is heard on all sides. Anvils behind the scene. — The clang of the anvils dies away.

A subterranean chasm appears,

which fills the whole scene and seems to open into narrow clefts on all sides.

ALBERICH drags the shrieking MIME from a side cleft.

Alberich.

Hehe! hehe!
to me! to me!
mischievous imp!
Prettily pinched,
now shalt thou be,
if in a trice thou
forgest me not
the work as I did command.

Mime

(howling).

Ohe! Ohe!
Au! Au!
Let me alone!
Forged it is,
as thou did'st bid,
with moil and toil
all is now done:
take but thy nails from my ear!

Alberich

(letting him go).

Why waitest thou then,
and shew'st it not?

Mime.

I only faltered
lest aught were failing.

Alberich.

What, then, was not finished?

Mime

(embarassed).

Here — and there —

Alberich.

What here and there?
Give me the thing!

He tries to catch his ear again. MIME, in his terror, lets fall a piece of metal work which he held convulsively in his hand. ALBERICH picks it up quickly and examines it carefully.

See, thou rogue!
All has been forged
as I gave my command,
finished and fit.
Ah, would then the dolt
cunningly trick me?
and keep the wonderful
work for himself,
that my craft alone
taught him to forge?

Known art thou, foolish thief?

(He places the "Tarnhelm" on his head.)

The helm fitteth the head:
now will the spell also speed?

"Night and darkness —
Nowhere seen!"

(His form vanishes; in its place a column of mist is seen.)

Seest thou me, brother?

Mime

(looks about him in astonishment).

Where art thou? I see thee not.

Alberich

(invisible).

Then feel me instead,

thou lazy rogue!
Take that for thy thievish thought!

Mime

(writhes under the blows he receives, whose sound is heard without the scourge being seen).

Alberich

(laughing, invisible).

I thank thee, blockhead,
thy work is true and fit!
Hoho! Hoho!
Nibelungs all,
bow ye to Alberich!
Everywhere over you
waits he and watches;
peace and rest
now have departed;
aye must ye serve him,
unseen though he be;
unaware he is nigh
ye still shall await him!
Thrall to him are ye for ever!
Hoho! Hoho!
hear him, he nears:
the Nibelungs' lord!

The column of vapour disappears in the background. The sound's of ALBERICH's scolding become fainter in the distance. — MIME cowers down in pain. — WOTAN and LOGE come down from a cleft in the rock.

Loge.

Nibelheim here.
Through pallid vapours
there glisten bright sparks from the smithies.

Wotan.

One groans aloud:
what lies on the ground?

Loge

(bends over Mime).

Say, wherefore moanest thou here?

Mime.

Ohe! Ohe!

Au! Au!

Loge.

Hei, Mime! merry dwarf!

What plagues and pinches thee so?

Mime.

Leave me in quiet!

Loge.

That will I surely,

and more yet, hark!

help I promise thee, Mime.

Mime

(he raises him with difficulty to his feet).

What help for me!

I must obey

the behests of my brother,

who makes me bondsman to him.

Loge.

But, Mime, to bind thee,

what gave him the power?

Mime.

By evil craft

moulded Alberich

from yellow gold

of the Rhine a ring:

at its mighty spell

we tremble in wonder;

by that now he enthralls us,

the Nibelungs' darksome host. —

Blithely we smiths once

worked at our anvils,

forged for our women

trinkets so fair,

delicate Nibelung toys:
we lightly laughed at our toil.
The wretch now compels us
to creep into caverns,
for him alone
we ever must toil.
Through the ring of gold
his greed still describes
where'er new treasure
lies hid in the clefts:
there must we all seek it,
trace it and dig it,
to melt the booty,
to forge him the gold,
with no peace nor rest
for him to heap up the hoard.

Loge.

Just now, then, an idler
wakened his ire!

Mime.

Poor, Mime, ah!
my fate was the hardest.
A helm of mail
had I to forge him;
with care he gave
commands for its making.
My wit conceived
the mighty power
that lay in the work
I had forged of steel;
the helm I fain
had held for my own;
to use the spell
to free me from Alberich's sway:
perchance — yes, perchance
the tyrant himself to o'ermaster
and place him by guile in my power;

the ring then had I ravished,
that, as a slave now I serve him,
in thrall he should then be to me!

Loge.

And wherefore, wise one,
didst thou not thrive?

Mime.

Ah! though the work I fashioned,
the magic that lurks therein,
the magic I guessed not aright.

He who planned the work
which then he seized,
he taught me, alas,
— but now all too late —
what a spell lay in the helm.

From my sight he vanished;
but, lurking unseen,
sharp strokes he showered on me.

Such pay for my pains
I, fool, did win!

(He rubs his back. WOTAN and LOGE laugh.)

Loge

(to WOTAN).

Confess, not light
will be our task.

Wotan.

But the foe will fall,
if thou but help!

Mime

(observes the gods more attentively).

What mean all your questions?
who are ye then, strangers?

Loge.

Friends to thee;
from all their need
the Niblungen folk we shall free!

(MIME, on bearing ALBERICH's approach, shrinks back frightened.)

Mime.

Look to yourselves;
Alberich nears.

Wotan.

We wait for him here.

WOTAN seats himself quietly on a stone. — ALBERICH, who has removed the Tarnhelm from his head and hung it on his girdle, drives before him with brandished whip a host of NIBLUNGS from the caverns below. They are laden with gold and silver handiwork which, under Alberich's continuous abuse and scolding, they heap together so as to form a large pile.

Alberich.

Hither! Thither!
Hehe! Hoho!
Lazy herd!
There in a heap
pile up the hoard!
Thou there, go up!
Wilt thou get on?
Indolent folk,
down with the treasure!
Shall I, then, help you?
Here with it all!

(He suddenly perceives WOTAN and LOGE.)

Hey! who is there?
What guests are these? —
Mime, to me!
Pestilent wretch!
Pratest thou here
with the vagabond pair?
Off, thou sluggard!

Back to thy smelting and smithing!

(He drives MIME with blows of his whip into the crowd of the Niblungs.)

Hey! to your labour!
Get ye hence straightway!
Quickly below!

From the new made shafts
go get me the gold!
Who slowly digs
shall suffer the whip!
That no one be idle,
Mime be surety,
or scarce shall he scape
from my scourge's lashes!
That I ev'rywhere wander
when no one is ware,
that wots he, think I, full well!
Linger ye still?
Loiter ye then?

(He draws his ring from his finger, kisses it and stretches it out threateningly.)

Tremble in terror,
ye vanquished host!
All obey
the rings's great lord!

With howls and shrieks, the NIBLUNGS — among whom is
MIME — separate and slip into different clefts in all directions.

Alberich

(looks long and suspiciously at WOTAN and LOGE).

What seek ye here?

Wotan.

Of Nibelheim's darksome land
strange tidings have reached our ears:
great the wonders
worked here by Alberich;
on these now to feast us
greed has made us thy guests.

Alberich.

Led hither
by envy ye came:
such gallant guests,
believe, well I know!

Loge.

Know'st thou me well,
ignorant imp?
Then say, who am I?
why dost so bark?
In chilly caves
when crouching thou lay'st,
where were thy light
and comforting fire then,
had Loge not on thee laughed?
What boots thee thy forging,
were not thy forge lit by me?
Kin to thee am I
and once was kind:
not warm, methinks, are thy thanks!

Alberich.

On light-elves
laughs now Loge,
the crafty rogue?
Art thou, false one, their friend,
as my friend once thou wert?
Haha! I laugh!
from them, then, nought need I fear.

Loge.

Methinks, then, me mayst thou trust.

Alberich.

In thy untruth trust I,
not in thy truth!
Undismayed now I defy you.

Loge.

Courage high
thy might doth confer;
grimly great
waxes thy power!

Alberich.

See'st thou the hoard,

by my host
heaped for me there?

Loge.

A goodlier never was seen.

Alberich.

It is to-day
but scanty measure!
Proud and mighty
shall the hoard be hereafter.

Wotan.

But what can boot thee the hoard,
in joyless Nibelheim,
where treasure nothing can buy?

Alberich.

Treasure to gather,
and treasure to bury,
serves me Nibelheim's night
But with the hoard
that in caverns I hide
shall wonders be worked by the Niblung;
and by its might
the world as my own I shall win me!

Wotan.

How beginn'st thou that, then, good friend?

Alberich.

Lapped in gently wafting breezes
ye who now live,
laugh and love:
with golden grasp,
ye godlike ones all shall be captured!
As love by me was once forsworn,
all that have life
shall eke forswear it!
Enchanted by gold,
the greed for gold shall enslave you!
On glorious heights
abide ye in gladness,

rocked in bliss;
the dark elves
ye disdain in your revels eternal!
Beware!
Beware!
For first your men
shall bow to my might,
then your winsome women,
who my wooing despised,
shall yield to Alberich's force,
though love be his foe!
Hahahaha!
Hear ye my word?
Beware!

Beware! of the hosts of the night,
when rises the Niblung hoard
from silent deeps to the day!

Wotan

(violently).

Away, impious wretch!

Alberich.

What says he?

Loge

(stepping between them).

Lose not thy senses!

(To ALBERICH.)

Who were not seized with wonder,
beholding Alberich's work?
If only thy craft can achieve
all thou dost hope of the treasure:
the mightiest then must I call thee,
for moon and stars
and the sun in his splendour,
could not then withstand thy power,
they too must be thy slaves.
Yet, well 'twould seem before all things

that the host of the Niblungs
who heap up thy hoard
should serve thee free from spite.
When thy hand held forth a ring,
then trembling cowered thy folk:
but, in thy sleep
a thief might slink by
and steal slyly the ring —
how, crafty one, then wouldst thou speed?

Alberich.

The deepest one Loge deems him;
others takes he
ever for fools:
that e'er I should need him,
and dearly pay
for word and aid,
that fain would the thief now hear!
This covering helm
myself I conceived;
the cunningest smith,
Mime, forced I to forge it:
swiftly to change me,
into all shapes
at my will to transform me,
serves the helm.
None can see me,
though he may seek;
yet ev'ry-where am I,
though hidden from sight.
So, free from care
not even thy craft need I fear,
thou kind, provident friend!

Loge.

Many wonders
oft have I looked on,
but such a marvel
ne'er met my eyes.

This work without equal,
none would believe in;
couldst thou but work this wonder,
thy might then were unending!

Alberich.

Think'st thou I lie
and boast me like Loge?

Loge.

Till it is proved
I trust not, dwarf, thy word.

Alberich.

Art puffed up with prudence,
fool, well nigh to bursting!
Then envy me now!
Command, and say in what shape
I shall presently stand?

Loge.

Be shaped as thou wilt;
but make me dumb with amaze!

Alberich

(puts the Tarnhelm on his head).

"Dragon dread,
wind thee and coil thee!"

He immediately disappears: in his place a huge serpent
writhes on the floor; it lifts its head and stretches its open
jaws toward WOTAN and LOGE.

Loge

(pretends to be seized with terror).

Ohe! Ohe!
Terrible dragon,
oh, swallow me not!
Spare his life but to Loge!

Wotan

(laughing).

Good, Alberich!
Good, thou rascal!
How quickly grew
the dwarf to the dragon so dread!

The dragon disappears and immediately ALBERICH is seen in his place.

Alberich.

Hehe! ye doubters!
trust ye me now?

Loge.

My trembling truly may prove it!
A giant snake
thou straight didst become:
now I have seen,
surely must I believe it.
But, as thou grewest,
canst also shape thee
quite small and slender?
The shrewdest way were that,
methinks, all danger to escape:
that, truly, would be too hard.

Alberich.

Too hard for thee,
dull as thou art!
How small shall I be?

Loge.

That the smallest cranny could hold thee,
where a frightened toad might be hid.

Alberich.

Pah! nought simpler!
Look at me now!

(He puts the Tarnhelm on his head.)

"Crooked toad,
creep thou hither!"

He disappears. The gods perceive a toad on the rocks, crawling towards them.

Loge

(to WOTAN).

There, grasp quickly!
Capture the toad!

Wotan places his foot on the toad. LOGE makes for his head and holds the Tarnhelm in his hand.

Alberich

(becomes suddenly visible in his own form, writhing under W'OTAN's foot).

Ohe! Accurst!
Now am I captive!

Loge.

Hold him fast
till he is bound.

LOGE binds his hands and feet with a rope. Both seize the prisoner, who struggles violently, and drag him to the shaft by which they came down.

Loge.

Now swiftly up!
there he is ours.
(They disappear, mounting upwards.)

—o—

FOURTH SCENE.

—o—

The scene changes as before, only in reverse order.

Open space on mountain heights.

The prospect is shrouded in pale mist as at the end of the second scene.

WOTAN and LOGE, bringing with them ALBERICH bound, come up out of the chasm.

Loge.

There, kinsman,
take now thy seat!
Look around thee,
there lies the world,
that so fain thou wouldst win for thine own:
what corner, say,
wilt give to me for a stall?

Alberich.

Infamous robber!

Thou rogue! Thou knave!
Loosen the rope,
let me go free;
or dearly shalt pay for thy trespass!

Wotan.

A captive art thou,
fast in my fetters,
as thou didst ween
the living world
now lay at thy will before thee.
Thou liest bound at my feet:
deny it, trembler, thou canst not!
To make thyself free,
now pay me the ransom.

Alberich.

O, thou dolt,
thou dreaming fool,
to trust blindly
the treacherous thief!
Fearful revenge
shall follow his crime!

Loge.

Art thirsting for vengeance?
must first, then, win thyself free:
to a man in bonds
the free pay nought for a trespass.
Then, dream'st thou of vengeance,
quickly bestir thee,
think of thy ransom betimes!

Alberich

(roughly).

Then say what ye demand!

Wotan.

The hoard and thy gleaming gold.

Alberich.

Thievish and ravenous gang!

(Aside.)

But if only I keep the ring,
the hoard I may lightly let go;
for anew were it won,
and right merrily fed
were it soon by the spell of the ring;
and a warning 'twould be
to render me wise;
not dearly the lesson were paid,
though for its gain I lose the gold.

Wotan.

Dost yield up the hoard?

Alberich.

Loosen my hand
to summon it here.

(LOGE unties the rope from his right hand.)

Alberich

(touches the ring with his lips and secretly murmurs a command).

Behold, the Nibelungs
hither are called!
By their lord commanded,
now from the dark
to the daylight they bring up the hoard;
then loosen these torturing bonds!

Wotan.

Not yet, till all hath been paid.

The NIBLUNGS ascend from the cleft, laden with the treasures of the hoard.

Alberich.

O shame and disgrace!
that my shrinking bondsmen
themselves should see me in bonds!
There let it lie,
as I command!
In a heap
pile up the hoard!
Dolts, must I help you?

Nay, look not on me!
Haste, there! haste!
Then hence with you homeward,
straight to your work!
off to your smithing!
Woe, if idlers ye be!
At your heels I follow you hard!

He kisses his ring and stretches it out commandingly. As if struck with a blow, the NIBLUNGS rush cowering and terrified towards the cleft into which they quickly disappear.

Alberich.
Here lies ransom;
now let me go:
and the tarnhelm there,
that Loge yet holds;
that give me in kindness again!

Loge
(throwing the tarnhelm on the hoard).
The plunder must pay for the pardon.

Alberich.
Accursed thief!
But, wait awhile!
He who forged me the one
makes me another;
still mine is the might
that Mime obeys.
Sad it seems
that crafty foes
should capture my cunning defence!
Well then! Alberich
all has given;
now loose, ye tyrants, his bonds!

Loge
(to WOTAN).
Art thou contented?
shall he go free?

Wotan.
A golden ring

gleams on thy finger:
hear'st thou, dwarf?
that also belongs to the hoard.

Alberich

(horrified).

The ring?

Wotan.

To win thee free,
that too must thou leave us.

Alberich.

My life, but not the ring!

Wotan.

The ring surrender;
with thy life do what thou wilt.

Alberich.

If but my life be left me,
the ring too must I deliver;
hand and head,
eye and ear
are not mine more truly
than mine is this golden ring!

Wotan.

Thine own thou callest the ring?
Ravest thou, impudent Niblung?
Truly tell
how thou gottest the gold,
from which the bright trinket was shaped.
Was't thine own, then,
which thou, rogue,
from the Rhines deep waters hast reft?
To the maidens hie thee,
ask thou of them
if their gold
for thine own they have given,
which thou hast robbed for the ring!

Alberich.

Infamous tricksters!
Shameful deceit!
Thief, dost cast
in my teeth the crime,
so dearly wished for by thee?
How fain wert thou
to steal the gold for thyself,
were but the craft
to forge it as easily gained?
How well, thou knave,
it works for thy weal
that the Niblung, I,
from shameful defeat,
and by fury driven,
the terrible magic did win
whose work laughs cheerly on thee!
Shall this hapless
and anguish-torn one's
curseladen,
fearfullest deed
but serve now to win thee
this glorious toy?
shall my ban bring a blessing on thee?
Heed thyself,
o'erweening god!
If I have sinned,
I sinned but against myself:
but against all that was,
is and shall be
sinn'st, eternal one, thou,
if rashly thou seizest my ring!

Wotan.

Yield the ring!
No right to that
can all thy prating e'er win.

(He seizes ALBERICH, and with violence draws the ring from his finger.)

Alberich

(with a horrible cry).

Ha! Defeated! Destroyed!
Of wretches the wretchedest slave!

Wotan

(contemplating the ring. He puts the ring on).

This ring now lifts me on high,
the mightiest lord of all might.

Loge.

Shall he go free?

Wotan.

Set him free!

Loge

(sets ALBERICH entirely free).

Slip away home!
Not a fetter holds thee:
free, fare thou now hence!

Alberich

(raising himself, laughing with rage).

Am I now free?
Free in sooth?
Thus greets you then
this my freedom's foremost word!
As by curse came it to me,
accurst be aye this ring!
As its gold
gave measureless might,
let now its magic
deal death to its lord!
Its wealth shall yield
pleasure to none,
to gladden none
shall its lustre laugh!
Care shall consume
aye him who doth hold it,
and envy gnaw him
who holdeth it not!

All shall lust
after its delights,
yet nought shall it boot him
who wins the prize!
To its lord no gain let it bring;
yet be murder drawn in its wake!
To death devoted,
chained be the craven by fear:
his whole life long
daily wasting away,
the treasure's lord
as the treasure's slave!
Till again once more
in my hand regained I shall hold it!
So — blesses,
in sorest need,
the Nibelung now his ring! —
Then, hold it fast,
ward it with heed!
But my curse canst thou not flee.
(He vanishes quickly in the cleft.)

Loge.
Didst thou listen
to love's farewell?

Wotan
(sunk in contemplation of the ring on his hand).
Let him give way to his wrath!
The thick mist in the foreground gradually clears away.

Loge
(looking to the right).
Fasolt and Fafner
hitherward fare:
Freia bring they to us.
(Through the dispersing mist DONNER, FROH and FRICKA appear
and hasten towards the foreground.)

Froh.
See, they have returned!

Donner.
Now welcome brother!

Fricka
(anxiously to WOTAN).
Bring'st thou joyful tidings?

Loge
(pointing to the hoard).
By cunning and force
the task is done:
there Freia's ransom lies.

Donner.
From the giant's hold
neareth the fair one.

Froh.
What balmiest air
wafteth to us,
blissful enchantment
fills every sense!
Sad, in sooth, were our fortune,
for ever sundered from her,
who painless, ne'er-ending youth
and rapturous joy doth bestow.

The foreground has become bright again and the aspect of the gods regains in the light its former freshness. The misty veil, however, still covers the background so that the distant castle remains invisible.

FASOLT and FAFNER enter, leading FREIA between them.

Fricka
(hastens joyfully towards her sister).
Loveliest sister,
sweetest delight!
Art thou to us once more given?

Fasolt
(restraining her).
Hold! Touch her not yet!
Still we claim her ours. —

On Riesenheim's
fastness of rock
took we our rest;
in truth and honour
the treaty's pledge
tended we.
Though sorely loth,
to you I bring her;
now pay us brothers
the ransom here.

Wotan.

At hand lies the ransom:
in goodly measure
the gold shall be meted.

Fasolt.

To lose the woman,
know ye, my spirit is sore:
if from my heart I must tear her,
the treasure hoard
heap ye then so
that from my sight
the blossoming maid it may hide!

Wotan.

By Freia's form,
then, measure the gold!

The two giants place FREIA in the middle. They then stick their staves into the ground in front of FREIA, so that they give the measure of her height and breadth.

Fafner.

Fast fixed are our poles there
to frame her form;
now heap the hoard to their height!

Wotan.

Haste with the work:
sorely it irks me!

Loge.

Help me Froh!

Froh.

Freia's shame
straight must be ended.

(LOGE and FROH hastily heap up the treasure between the poles.)

Fafner.

Not so loosely
piled be the gold.
Firm and close
fill up the gauge!

He roughly presses the treasure together. He stoops down to look for crevices.

Here still I see through:
come, stop me these crannies!

Loge.

Away, thou rude one!
touch thou not aught!

Fafner.

Look here! this cleft must be closed!

Wotan

(turning away moodily).

Deep in my breast
burns this disgrace!

Fricka.

See how in shame
standeth the glorious maid:
for release beseeches
her suffering look.
Heartless man!
Our loveliest bears this through thee!

Fafner.

Pile on still more!

Donner.

I bear no more;
foaming rage
wakens the rogue in my breast!

Come hither, hound!
wouldst thou measure,
then take thy measure with me!

Fafner.

Patience, Donner!
roar where it serves:
thy thunder helps thee not here.

Donner

(aiming a blow).

It will serve, scoundrel, to crush thee.

Wotan.

Peace, my friend!
Methinks now Freia is hid.

Loge.

The hoard is spent.

Fafner

(measures the hoard closely with his eye).

Yet shines to me Holda's hair:
there, yonder toy
throw on the hoard!

Loge.

What? e'en the helm?

Fafner.

Quickly, here with it!

Wotan.

Let it go also!

Loge

(throws the Tarnhelm on the pile).

Then all is now finished!
Are ye contented?

Fasolt.

Freia, the fair one,
see I no more!
then, is she released?
must I now lose her?

(He goes close up and peers through the hoard.)

Ah! yet gleams

her glance on me here;
her eyes like stars
send me their beams;
still through a cleft
I look on their light. —
While her sweet eyes shine upon me,
from the woman will I not turn!

Fafner.

Hey! I charge you,
come stop me this crevice!

Loge.

Ne'er contented!
see ye then not,
all spent is the hoard?

Fafner.

Nay, not so, friend!
on Wotan's finger
gleams the gold of a ring:
give that to fill up the crevice!

Wotan.

What? this my ring?

Loge.

Hear ye counsel!
the Rhine-daughters
should own the gold;
and to them Wotan will give it.

Wotan.

What pratest thou there?
The prize that I have won me,
without fear I hold for myself!

Loge.

Evil chance
befalls the promise
I gave the sorrowing maids!

Wotan.

But thy promise bindeth me not:
as booty mine is the ring.

Fafner.

But here for ransom
must it be rendered.

Wotan.

Boldly ask what ye will,
all I will grant you;
for all the world
yet I will not yield up the ring!

Fasolt

(angrily pulls Freia from behind the hoard).

All's at end!
as erst it stands;
now ours is Freia for ever!

Freia.

Help me! Help me!

Fricka.

Cruel god!
give them their way!

Froh.

Hold not the gold back!

Donner.

Grant them the ring then!

Wotan.

Leave me in peace:
the ring will I hold!

FAFNER holds back FASOLT who is pressing to go. All stand confounded. WOTAN turns angrily away from them. The stage has again become dark. From a rocky cleft on one side breaks forth a bluish light in which ERDA becomes suddenly visible, rising from below to half her height.

Erda

(stretching her hand warningly towards WOTAN).

Yield it, Wotan! Yield it!
Flee the ring's dread curse!
Hopeless
and darksome disaster
lies hid it its might.

Wotan.

What woman warneth me thus?

Erda.

All that e'er was — know I;
how all things are,
how all things will be —
see I too:
the endless world's
allwise one,
Erda, warneth thee now.
Ere the world was,
daughters three
of my womb were born;
what mine eyes see,
nightly the Norns ever tell thee.
But danger most dire
calleth me
hither to-day.
Hear me! Hear me! Hear me!
All that e'er was endeth!
A darksome day
dawns for your godhood!
be counselled, give up the ring!

ERDA sinks slowly as far as the breast. The bluish light begins to fade.

Wotan.

With mystic awe
fills me thy word:
go not till more thou tellest!

Erda

(disappearing).

I warned thee;
thou know'st enough:
brood in care and fear!

(She completely disappears.)

Wotan.

If then care shall torment me,

thee must I capture,
all must thou tell me!

WOTAN tries to go into the chasm to stay ERDA. FROH and FRICKA throw themselves in his way and hold him back.

Fricka.

What wouldst thou, raging one?

Froh.

Go not, Wotan!
Touch not the Wala,
heed well her words!

Donner

(turning to the giants with resolution).

Hear, ye giants!
come back, and wait ye!
the gold shall be your guerdon.

Freia.

Dare I then hope it?
deem ye Holda
truly such ransom worth?

(All look attentively at Wotan.)

Wotan

(rousing himself from deep thought, grasps his spear and brandishes it in token of a bold decision).

To me, Freia!
Thou shalt be freed.
Bought with the gold,
bring us our youth once again!
Ye giants, take now your ring!

(He throws the ring on the hoard.)

The giants let FREIA go: she hastens joyfully to the gods, who for some time caress her in turn, with the greatest delight.

Fafner

spreads out an enormous sack and sets himself to pack the hoard into it.

Fasolt

(opposing Fafner).

Stay, thou greedy one!
Something give me too!

Justice in sharing
fits us brothers.

Fafner.

More for the maid than the gold
hungered thy love-sick look;
I scarce could bring thee,
fool, to the bargain;
as, without sharing,
Freia thou wouldst have wooed,
if now I share,
trust me to seize
on the greater half for myself!

Fasolt.

Shame on thee, thief!
Tauntest thou me? —

(to the gods):

You call I as judges:
say how the hoard
shall justly be halved!
(WOTAN turns contemptuously away.)

Loge.

The hoard let him ravish;
hold but thou fast to the ring!

Fasolt

(throws himself on FAFNER, who has, meanwhile, been busily
packing up).

Away! Thou rascal!
mine is the ring,
mine was it for Freia's glance!
(He snatches hastily at the ring.)

Fafner.

Touch thou it not!
the ring is mine!

(They struggle together. FASOLT wrests the ring from FAFNER.)

Fasolt.

I have it, fast I hold it!

Fafner.

Hold it fast lest it should fall!

FAFNER strikes out with his staff and with one blow stretches FASOLT on the ground: from the dying man he then hastily wrests the ring.

Now gloat thou on Freia's glance!
For the ring see'st thou no more!

He puts the ring into the sack and quietly goes on packing the hoard.

(All the gods stand horrified. A long solemn silence.)

Wotan.

Fearful now,
appeareth the curse's power!

Loge.

Thy luck, Wotan,
where were its equal?
Much was gained
when the ring thou didst win;
but that now thou hast lost it
boots thee yet more:
for thy foemen, see!
murder their friends
for the gold thou hast let go.

Wotan

(deeply stirred).

What dark boding doth bind me?
Care and fear
fetter my soul —
how I may end them,
teach me, then, Erda!
to her must I descend!

Fricka

(caressing him cajolingly).

Where stray'st thou, Wotan?
Lures thee not friendly
the fortress proud?
Now it awaits
with kindly shelter its lord.

Wotan.

With evil wage
paid was the work!

Donner

(pointing to the background which is still wrapped in a veil of mist).

Sultrily mists
float in the air;
heavy hangeth
the gloomy weight!
Ye hovering clouds,
come now with lightning and thunder
and sweep the heavens clear!

DONNER has mounted on a high rock by the precipice and now swings his hammer.

Heda! Heda!
To me, all ye mists!
Ye vapours, to me!
Donner, your lord,
calleth his hosts!
At his hammer's swing
hitherward sweep!
heda! heda!
Vapours and fogs!

Donner, your lord, calleth his hosts!

During the following the mists collect round him. He disappears entirely in an ever-darkening and thickening thundercloud. The stroke of his hammer is heard to fall heavily on the rock. A vivid flash of lightning comes from the cloud; a violent clap of thunder follows.

Brother, to me!
Shew them the way o'er the bridge!

FROH has also disappeared in the clouds. Suddenly the clouds disperse; DONNER and FROH become visible: from their feet a rainbow bridge stretches with blinding radiance across the valley to the castle which now glows in the light of the setting sun.

Fafner beside his brother's corpse has at length packed up the whole hoard and with the great sack on his shoulders has left the stage during Donner's summons to the storm.

Froh.

The bridge leads you homeward,
light yet firm to your feet:
now tread undaunted
its terrorless path!

Wotan

(and the other gods contemplate the glorious sight, speechless).

Golden at eve
the sunlight gleameth;
in glorious light
glow fastness and fell.
In the morning's radiance,
bravely it glistened,
lying lordless there,
proudly luring my feet.
From morning till evening,
in care and fear,
unblest, I worked for its winning!
The night is nigh:
from all its ills
shelter it offers now.
So — greet I the home,
safe from dismay and dread!
(to FRICKA.)
Follow me, wife!
In Walhall dwell now with me.

Fricka.

What meaneth the name, then?
Strange 'tis methinks to my hearing.

Wotan.

What my spirit has found
to master my dread,
when triumph is won —
maketh the meaning clear.

He takes FRICKA by the hand and walks slowly with her towards the bridge: FROH, FREIA and DONNER follow.

Loge

(remaining in the foreground and looking after the gods).

They are hasting on to their end
who now deem themselves strong in their greatness.
Ashamed am I

to share in their dealings;
to flickering fire
again to transform me,
fancy lureth my will:
to burn and waste them
who bound me erewhile,
rather than blindly
sink with the blind —
e'en were they of gods the most godlike —
not ill were it, meseems!
I must bethink me:
who knows what may hap?

He goes, assuming a careless manner, to join the gods.

The ~~three~~ RHINE-DAUGHTERS in the valley.

The three Rhine-daughters.
Rhinegold!
guileless gold!
how brightly and clear
shimmered thy beams on us!
For thy pure lustre
now lament we:
give us the gold,
o give us its glory again!

Wotan

(preparing to set his foot on the bridge, stops and turns round).

What plaints come hither to me?

Loge.

The river children
bewailing the stolen gold.

Wotan.

Accursed nixies!
Cease their clamourous taunts.

Loge

(calling down towards the valley).

Ye in the water!
why wail ye to us?

Hear what Wotan doth grant!
Gleams no more
on you maidens the gold,
in the newborn godly splendour
bask ye henceforth in bliss!

The gods laugh and cross the bridge during the following

The Rhine-daughters.

Rhinegold!
guileless gold!
O would that thy treasure
were glittering yet in the deep!
Tender and true
'tis but in the waters:
false and base
are all who revel above!

As the gods cross the bridge to the castle the curtain falls.



R. Wagner.

Album of 12 songs and arias for a male voice (English and German) —

| | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|---|---|
| a. Tenor | . | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 4 | 0 |
| b. Baritone | . | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 4 | 0 |

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| 4. When for the prize of song (Tannhäuser) | . | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 1 | 6 |
| 5. When I behold (Tannhäuser) | . | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 1 | 6 |
| 6. To the evening star (Tannhäuser) | . | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 1 | 6 |
| 7. Dost thou not breathe (Lohengrin) | . | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 1 | 0 |
| 8. In distant land (Lohengrin) | . | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 1 | 0 |
| 9. By silent hearth (Mastersingers) | . | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 2 | 0 |
| 10. St. John stood | . | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 1 | 0 |
| 11. Walter's prize song | . | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 2 | 0 |
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| 3. In the hothouse | } 5 Poems | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 2 | 0 |
| 4. Pains | | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 2 | 0 |
| 5. Dreams | | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 2 | 0 |
| 6. Cradle song | | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 1 | 6 |
| 7. Come, my darling | . | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 1 | 6 |
| 8. Expectancy | . | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 1 | 6 |
| 9. I saw the towns (Rienzi) | . | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 1 | 6 |
| 10. Spinning song (Dutchman) | . | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 1 | 6 |
| 11. Senta's ballad (Dutchman) | . | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 2 | 0 |
| 12. Ye halls beloved (Tannhäuser) | . | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 1 | 6 |
| 13. Elizabeth's prayer (G flat, F, E flat) | . | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 1 | 6 |
| 14. Ye winds (Lohengrin) | . | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 1 | 0 |
| 15. Lonely a hapless maiden (Lohengrin) | . | . | . | . | . | . | n. | 1 | 6 |
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